

Improved batting helps Lions progress toward Sky-Em league title

With a season-high batting performance on Friday, there's nothing to suggest Cottage Grove can't roll its way to a Sky-Em title

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The Lions' baseball team is sitting pretty at the top of the Sky-Em league despite Elmira standing five spots ahead of Cottage Grove in the state-wide rankings. The Falcons boast a 12-4 record and sit at fourth in the state for class 4A, while the Lions sit at 12-5 and are ranked ninth. However, it's widely known with any sport at any level that rankings do not always accurately define where teams stand.

Cottage Grove is 7-1 in league play and has already beaten Elmira 7-5, a team that stands at 6-2 against Sky-Em opponents. While the Lions escaped with a victory in extra innings against Elmira, Cottage Grove has a significant numerical advantage over the Falcons for the Sky-Em. For starters, the score of the aforementioned game somewhat misrepresents the tone on the field. Elmira slowly crept back to tie the game, sure, but the Lions' aggressive offensive strategy overshadowed the resilience of the Falcons. It took five innings for the Falcons to accomplish what the Lions did in two. And now with a vengeful win against Sisters and a run-away victory at Sutherlin, it's arguable that there is no conten-



After hitting his second home run of the season, Payton Presley jogs to his teammates that await him at home plate.

Photo by Sam Wright

tion against Cottage Grove being the dominant team in the league.

With a 6-0 loss against Sisters less than two weeks after Cottage Grove handed the Outlaws their first loss, it looked like another threat loomed over the Lions' claim over the league. Just four days after their shutout loss, April 19's matchup against Sisters was a true test of the grit of Dan Geisler's varsity squad. With the Outlaws racking up three runs in the top of the third,

Cottage Grove directly responded with two runs after senior Bryce Allen earned a triple off of a hit into deep left-center field and stole home plate. Cottage Grove's defense prevented the Outlaw's from scoring any runs despite a few sloppy errors.

The highlight of the game came during the bottom of the fifth inning, the Lions' still trailing 3-2. With two outs and no one on base, senior Payton Presley stood up to the plate and hit a deep ball to right field

that sailed over the fence with ease, his second home run of the season. The left-hander is often in good position to hit the ball over Kelly Field's closer right field fence. The solo home run put the score even at three, and Hunter Harris closed the two extra innings from the mound before Presley hit a base hit past the first and second basemen with the bases loaded, racking in one more run in the ninth.

The win marked the last game of the regular season against the

Outlaws, and their 2-1 record against them effectively eliminates another contender for a league title. Aside from Elmira, Cottage Grove has handled every other Sky-Em opponent strongly, including a 12-2 rout against Junction City.

The only concern for the team is batting. Many of the Lions' runs come from aggressive baserunning rather than RBIs. While Cottage Grove ranks among the top in stolen bases, many of their wins have come with a

batting average of under .250, and their overall batting average on the season is .274. However, Friday's win over Sutherlin answered many concerns. The Lions marched into Sutherlin and racked up 15 hits and an average of .429, a season high in the 12-6 victory. A total of 10 players came away with a hit, and eight of those players batted a .500 or higher. Presley and Ryan East finished with .667 and had

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MLB youth competition to be held in Cottage Grove

Pitch, Hit and Run comes to Cottage Grove on May 7

BY SAM WRIGHT
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Major League Baseball is coming to Cottage Grove to give local youth a chance to display their skills on a professional field. The Pitch Hit and Run competition is a nationwide skills event for children between the ages of seven and 14, and local contests begin on May 7.

The Cottage Grove Lions' Club will host the competition where contestants will have to display their ability in pitching, batting and baserunning. For the pitching contest, participants will be tested on their ability to throw a ball at a designated target simulating a strike zone. The competition is flexible, as any method of pitching is permitted.

In order to ensure a level of consistency, the hitting contest will have a stationary tee throughout all age groups, and the competition will be measured by distance and accuracy of a hit.

For the running contest, participants will start from second base and will be timed as they round third and eventually reach home plate.

All of the events are individually scored and converted to a total point score through

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CG sees 28 athletes at WU's Meet of Champions in Salem

The Lions participated in a total of 39 events and 25 of those saw CG athletes finish at or above their initial seed

BY SAM WRIGHT
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Despite a conflicting schedule with prom, 28 Cottage Grove athletes qualified for the Meet of Champions held on April 23 at Willamette University in Salem. The meet hosted a total of 39 teams, making it the largest meet of the season (excluding the indoor classics a few athletes were invited to). With lingering health concerns and sub-prime weather conditions, the Lions defied Mother Nature and still managed to break personal records and place high among the deep competition of the meet.

Head Coach Ricky Knutson was pleasantly surprised when his athletes had 16 personal and season bests.

"There was a really bad headwind for the runners and the triple jump and long jump participants," Knutson said. But despite the less-than-ideal conditions on the track, the Lions still found areas of success.

Michael Tharpe ran the 100-meter dash once again and finished with a personal best of 11.46 seconds and placed third overall. Hannah Albrecht also



Photo courtesy of Ricky Knutson

Brad Geisler placed ninth in the shot put and second in the discus event.

impressed spectators as she returned from an Achilles injury and has sat out the last couple of meets. Albrecht placed 10th in the 200-meter race with a time of 27.72 and then took a second-place finish in the 400-meter run with a time of 1:01.06, just 0.04 seconds behind Sweet Home's Bethany Gingerich. Although Albrecht's results were strong coming off of an injury, Knutson remains cautious to save Albrecht for the more significant meets.

"I'm always weary to say someone is 100 percent coming off of an injury, but she said she felt pretty good, so we'll

just have to see," Knutson said. Regardless, the top five finishers of the 400-meter race had times under 62 seconds, making Albrecht's second-place finish all the more impressive.

Tharpe would later return to the track for the high hurdles, where he took home another first-place finish with a time of 15.43 seconds. Tharpe's personal best was set earlier this season with a time of 15 seconds flat, and coaches are waiting to see if Tharpe can break 15 seconds. This would make him a dangerous competitor for a state title

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Athlete of the Week

Hannah Albrecht returns with strong performances on Saturday



The junior returned after sitting out the last few meets due to an Achilles injury suffered early in the season. With unfavorable weather conditions, Albrecht finished the 400-meter race in 61.06 seconds, just 0.04 seconds behind the first-place winner.

Cottage Grove
Speedway

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